Beginning of

Rich and poor in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels

Bound volume is preceded by

The experience of the cross in the New Testament and in the life of today

What is religion? : chapters in a guide for college discussion groups

Bound volume is continued by

Jesus Christ in the mind of today

The Bible self-revising as shown in the conception of God

Search by above titles on archive.org to continue reading this collection of Pacific School of Religion Theses from 1926, call number Thesis Cage 1926 v.2

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2024 with funding from
Graduate Theological Union

https://archive.org/details/b14098398

RICH AND POOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

BY

GALEN LEE ROSE,

A.B., Drake University, 1915

M.A., Pacific School of Religion, 1925

A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF NEW TESTAMENT OF PACIFIC SCHOOL OF RELIGION, AT BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA, IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF DIVINITY.

APRIL, 1926

CONTENTS

Pages

INTRODUCTION 1-2

I. RICH AND POOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT
Conflict between Amorite and Israelite--Class distinctions under judges -- Samuel's warning Injustice under the Kings -- The prophets as spokesmen for a class -- Their universal elements -- Conditions after the Exile -- Poor and pious -- Differences in Messianic expectation -- The legal codes and the poor -- Summary of Old Testament attitude 3-18

II. THE APPROACH OF MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE
The Synoptics the source of our study -- The Synoptic problem -- Differences in emphasis and point of view of the Evangelists -- Rich and poor an interest of all three Gospels -- Apocalyptic influences -- Social element in Apocalypticism -- The social note rather than the catastrophic influential in the Gospels -- Use of terms for rich and poor. 19-28

III. THE TEACHING IN MATTHEW AND LUKE
Matthew and Luke the chief sources of teaching on rich and poor -- All three Gospels show Jesus as friend of poor -- Jesus at Nazareth -- Answer to John the Baptist -- The Beatitudes and the woes -- Warnings against seeking riches -- The Rich Fool -- The Talents and the Pounds -- Almsgiving --The Great Judgment -- The Rich Young Man --The Unjust Steward -- The Rich Man and Lazarus -- Deceitfulness of riches. 29-46

IV. THE NATURE AND VALUE OF JESUS' TEACHING ON RICH AND POOR - CONCLUSION
The contrasted estimates of Cone and Kent -- Jesus' attitude transcends class interest -- Conclusions as to Jesus' teaching -- Its permanent validity. 47-53

INTRODUCTION

This is a discussion of the "rich" and the "poor" rather than of riches and poverty, because of the central place that persons have in the body of literature that constitutes our Bible. The interest of the writers of Scripture seems to be more largely in persons than in abstractions. The laws of the Old Testament, we discover, grow out of specific situations and needs; the declarations of the prophets are not vague generalizations but deal with concrete and present problems; the teachings of Jesus were never given apart from the persons involved in those teachings. The relatedness of the Bible to life is one of its significant features and accounts for its continuous appeal and value to men of every age.

Our interest in this study is in the class distinctions among men which grow out of their economic situation as these distinctions have testimony borne to them in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels. We are interested in the relations of rich and poor, in the attitude of the religion of the Hebrews toward wealth and poverty, in the methods proposed for the elimination of poverty, and especially in Jesus' attitude toward the economic conditions that divide.

Inasmuch as this thesis is being written in the field of New Testament the consideration of our problem in the Old Testament, which first occupies our attention,

will be merely preliminary to a study of the teachings of the Gospels, and so will be general rather than detailed, affording a background against which we shall be enabled to see and appreciate the New Testament message. We shall strive to see the problem as it presented itself at various periods in Old Testament history and as its influence is seen in laws, in song and in story. As we come to the Synoptics we shall study the text of the different Gospels and strive to discover what actually was the teaching and attitude of Jesus.

We shall consider:

I. Rich and Poor in the Old Testament.

II. The Approach of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

III. Matthew and Luke Compared.

IV. The Nature and Value of Jesus Teachings on Rich and Poor.

I. RICH AND POOR IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"The growth of social institutions takes place at the point of contact between two or more classes, races, or 'interests'. In the long period before the Exile, Hebrew society was ruled alternately by the Israelite and Amorite traditions inherited from its double ancestry. When the Israelite tradition was dominant, the social problem was recognized; and when the Amorite tradition obtained the ascendancy, the social problem was rejected or suppressed." Thus Louis Wallis summarizes the struggle -- racial and class -- which lies back of the records of the Old Testament.[1]

For the Israelitish nation instead of being a homogeneous people of unmixed blood, was made up of divergent elements. The original Israelites we discover to have been a desert people, nomads -- and the earliest records of their entrance into Palestine reveal a semi-nomadic people. Abraham is the typical half-nomad. Entering the land of Canaan, this pastoral people discovered a civilization which had gone far beyond their own. Agriculture had been developed to a considerable degree. Cities had been built. Commerce was carried on. The inhabitants of Canaan had entered upon a settled agricultural and commercial type of life. Their customs, ideals and

1. Soc. Study of Bible, p.216.

attitudes were quite different from those of the nomadic invaders. Their social outlook was more nearly that of the typical Oriental nation. Their opposing points of view, their contrasted ideas of right and wrong, their different conceptions of "mishpat" formed the basis for the millenium-long struggle which the Old Testament records. The struggle while ultimately religious, grew at first out of economic and social differences. The remnants of the two points of view -- the nomadic and the agricultural -- are to be seen intermingled in the Decalogue. (Concerning the term "mishpat" Wallis says:"To translate the term 'mishpat' in the passage, Is.42:1-4, merely as 'religion' is to obscure the fundamental meaning. The word is here distinctly related to consideration for the poor, who are symbolized by the reed just ready to break, and the light on the point of extinction. As Whitehouse observes, the word is here used 'to express the entirety of judgments or customs or usages of Yahweh's religion."[1])

Among the nomads there was little distinction between rich and poor. Differences in wealth and position existed, but, unlike other Oriental peoples, the nomadic tribes were bound together in a blood brotherhood that, in a remarkable way for a primitive people, recognized the value of the common man. All mingled together regardless of wealth. Even after the entrance into Canaan and with

1. Op. cit., p.148, footnote.

the transition to agricultural life, this relationship persisted and wealth and social position were minor factors in power and leadership. "Leadership was not a prerogative of wealth," says Cone,[1] "but was attained by men of valour. Jephtha was a man of low birth and an outcast, who fought his way to the distinction of a judge; and Gideon when conscious of a call to leadership, pleads the meanness of his station, his family being 'the poorest in Manasseh' and he 'the least in his father's house'[2]".

But even in the period of the Judges, while an agreement had not yet been reached between the Israelites and the original inhabitants of the land -- before there took place that interchange of ideas that resulted in the introduction of the class distinctions that were inherent in the civilizations of settled peoples -- there arose injustice and the violation of the rights of the people by those in authority. It was this violation of ancient custom, this violation of brotherhood, which brought about the demand for a king. "And it came to pass, when Samuel was old, that he made his sons judges over Israel..... And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted 'mishpat'. Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah; and they said unto him, 'Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not

1. Rich and Poor in N.T., p.12.
2. Judges 6:14; 11:1.

in thy ways. Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations'".[1]

There follows the record of Samuel's warnings against kings and his presentation of the facts concerning class distinctions and injustice which will arise.[2] This narrative comes from a much later time, but not only reveals the later suffering at the hands of the kings, but also the unpleasant class discriminations on the part of the kings of other peoples, with which Samuel was doubtless familiar.[3] There will be the subjection of citizens to a state of slavery; the best of the fields of the people, the choicest of their vineyards and oliveyards, will be taken by the king and given to his favorites; taxes will be so heavy that the suffering populace will cry out, but to no avail.

It seems that in the early years of the kingdom the differences in class were not marked. There was no great splendor in the court; Saul, the king, continued to live as an ordinary farmer.[4] But in this period there is to be found the germ of class dissention. For when David fled from before Saul and escaped to the cave of Adullam, "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and everyone that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became captain over them; and there were with him about four hundred men".[5] However, this

1. I Sam.8:1,3,4,5.
2. Ibid.,8: 11-18.
3. Wallis, op.cit.p.92.
4. I.Sam.14:50; II Sam.21:8.
5. I Sam. 22:1,2.

element of discontent was not particularly marked until the reign of Solomon.

It was at the coronation of David's son that the court took on real regal splendor. Cone describes this period: "Under the rule of Solomon the monarchy began to bear its legitimate fruits of inequality. While the splendor of the court was supported in a measure out of the profits of a commerce that he skillfully conducted, it is doubtless true that the people had no small part of the burden to bear. The wealth that he acquired by trade was chiefly employed in the gratification of his inordinate love of luxury and display. We read of rich works of art, two hundred targets of beaten gold of six hundred shekels each, three hundred shields of beaten gold, and a great throne of ivory overlaid with the finest gold. All his drinking vessels were of gold. Such things, says the narrator, 'were nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon'. When besides all this we take into account the fact that 'he loved many strange women, together with the daughters of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites', maintaining a domestic establishment of 'seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines' we can form a conception of the expenses of his royal state and the social inequalities that it entailed."[1] Without doubt it was the remembrance of the luxury and unjust burden of taxation of the days

1.Cone, op.cit., p.14.

of Solomon which give definite shape to the warning against kings which is put into the mouth of Samuel.

The injustice involved in the maintenance of the luxurious court of Solomon was continued under his successors. To his son Rehoboam is attributed the answer when the people had complained of oppression and cruelty: "My father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."[1] That this condition of inequality continued up until the time of the Exile in the divided kingdom is testified to by the records of the kings and by the denunciations and warnings of the prophets.

The "mishpat" of the Canaanites was becoming more and more the "mishpat" of the ruling classes. The old Israelitish conception of the value of the common man and the preservation of his rights was now chiefly the property of the mountain-dwelling descendants of the nomads -- those who had not mingled with the inhabitants of the land.[2] The insurgent prophets were the representatives of this group. Their cry was a cry of justice based on the old morality. From the time of Elijah the prophets voice their denunciations of the wealthy and condemn the violation of the rights of the poor and disadvantaged.

One of the outstanding instances of flagrant violation of human rights is the confiscation of the vineyard of Naboth by Ahab and Jezebel. The two points of view

1. I Kings 12:11.
2. Wallis, op.cit., p.145.

are here most clearly brought out,-- the peasant's belief in his right to the possession of his patrimony, the assumption on the part of Jezebel of the right of the king to do what he will with the life and the property of the peasant who deigns to assert any personal rights. It is to the support of the peasant's point of view that Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Jehonadab ben Rechab and the later prophets come.

It is the assertion of Wallis that the words of the prophets have been so wrenched from their context as to present their point of view as far more revolutionary and radical than it actually was. He says: "What the prophets really fought against, in their fierce denunciations of the wealthy, was the contraction of the master class upon itself, and the crowding of the less fortunate 'baals', their widows, and orphans into the lower, and slave class. The prophets never protested against human slavery, or any other institution whose logic ultimately denies 'human rights'. As a consequence, they have no affinity with modern democracy. The prophets are to be compared with the alert modern business man who pays no heed to the 'wage question' as it affects the 'laboring class', but who protests vigorously against the competition of his big rival."[1] Recognizing as we do the national and racial limits within which the ethics of the prophets was confined, recognizing that in it all the foreigner had no part, yet it seems that Wallis is here going too far, that

1.Wallis, op.cit., p.161

instead of the prophets having "no affinity with modern democracy", they have put their feet in the path whose upward end leads to that very thing. While the burdens of their own suffering class afforded the occasion of their outcry, there is inherent in their message something of far wider reach and more permanent significance. It was not merely the selfish protest against an injustice to themselves, but the recognition of the fact that Jahveh was the protector of the poor of his people and that it was a violation of the will of Jahveh that any of his people should be downtrodden and oppressed. There is more than a selfish class consciousness in such passages as these from Amos which portray the injustices of his time:

"They have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes". 1

"And they lay themselves down beside every altar upon clothes taken in pledge." 2

"And I will smite the winterhouse with the summerhouse; and the houses of ivory shall perish." 3

"Forasmuch therefore as ye trample upon the poor, and take exactions from him of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards but ye shall not drink the wine thereof". 4

"Hear this, O ye that would swallow up the needy, and cause the poor in the land to fail, saying: When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell grain? And the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and dealing falsely with balances of deceit; that we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes, and sell the refuse of the wheat? Jahveh hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works." 5

Or again, there is far reaching and abiding significance in the following statements from Micah:

1. Amos 2:6.
2. Ibid. 2:8.
3. Ibid. 3:15.
4. Ibid. 5:11
5. Ibid. 8:4-7

"Hear, I pray you, ye heads of Jacob, and rulers of the house of Israel: is it not for you to know justice? ye who hate the good and love the evil; who pluck off their skin from off them and their flesh from off their bones; who also eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them and break their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron. Then shall they cry unto Jahveh, but he will not answer them; yea, he will hide his face from them at that time, according as they have wrought evil in their doings." 1

"... that abhor justice and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet they lean upon Jahveh, and say, Is not Jahveh in the midst of us? No evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps." 2

"A scant measure that is abominable ... wicked balances .... a bag of deceitful weights .... For the rich men are full of violence." 3

"Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! When morning is light, they practice it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields and seize them; and houses and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage." 4

The first chapter of Isaiah is a fierce denunciation of the formal worship of the people which takes no account of justice and righteousness.

"Seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. ..... How is the faithful city become a harlot! She that was full of justice! Righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. Thy princes are rebellious and companions of thieves; everyone loveth bribes and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them." 5

"It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses: what mean ye that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor? saith the Lord, Jahveh of hosts." 6

"Woe unto them that join house to house, and lay field to field, till there be no room, and ye be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land." 7

1. Micah 3:1-4.
2. Ibid. 3:9-12.
3. Ibid. 6:10 f.
4. Ibid. 2:1,2.
5. Isaiah 1:17,21-23.
6. Ibid. 3:14,15.
7. Ibid. 5:8

Isaiah describes the luxury, the pride and the haughtiness of the wealthy. They "walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet"; they wear "anklets and the cauls and the crescents and the pendants and the bracelets and the mufflers; the head-tires and the ankle-chains; and the sashes and the perfume boxes and the amulets; the rings and the nose-jewels; the festival robes and the mantels and the shawls and the satchels; the handmirrors and the fine linen and the turbans and the veils."[1]

Jeremiah declares that the blessing of Jahveh shall be upon his people "if ye thoroughly execute justice between a man and his neighbor; if ye oppress not the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow."[2]

We might quote at length from the prophets, showing the intensity of their feeling for the poor and their hostility to the rich, but this is enough to reveal their attitude. McFadyen says of them: "Considering the ethical earnestness of theprophets, it is impossible and absurd to charge them with materialism in their championship of the rights of the poor. They are the disinterested and incorruptible opponents of poverty, because they believe that it, and the social conditions which create it, are in opposition to the will of God."[3]

After the time of the exile we find that conditions were little better than in the pre-exilic kingdoms. Injustices and abuses, the robbing of the poor, the unjust

1. Isaiah 3:16-23. 2. Jer. 7:5,6.
3. Exp. Times, Jan.,1926, p.186.

imprisonment of debtors, the taking from the poor of all their social privileges continued and class bitterness was, if possible, more intense than in earlier days. The Psalms and the non-canonical apocalyptic literature voice the sentiment of the poor. In this period so much of the oppression and injustice was at the expense of the righteous and faithful Jews that the terms for "poor", 'ani, 'ebyon, and dal, came to designate these righteous disadvantaged. The"poor" were the pious.[1]

This classification of the poor as the pious andt the rich as the violent cannot, however, be pressed too far. For doubtless a great many of the poor had no interest in the welfare of their fellows or in the religion of Jahveh, but were wholly self-centered in their interests; and certain it is that from the ranks of the wealthy came some benefactors of the nation. Says Wallis: "The work of the great prophets before the exile gave expression to a prejudice against the wealthy, in which there was little or no attempt to draw distinctions; and it was only as this prejudice was partly overcome that rich men like Nehemiah were able to share actively in the reconstitution of Israel and the establishment of the Jewish church. Wealth is necessary to the religious process. The reconstitution of Israel was very largely the work of consecrated rich men. These men paid the bills of Judaism;"---

1.For fuller study of poor in post-exilic period, see my Master's thesis, Ch.1; see also, Driver, "Poor", HDB Vol IV, p.19 f.

and in the next clause we find the roots of much later trouble --- "and in time the upper classes began to regard themselves as the proprietors of the Jewish church."[1]

Out of these differences of class there came differences in the form of Messianic expectation. Among people of all classes there was the expectation of a coming Messiah. But with one group, the more prosperous folk, there was the anticipation of the day when Israel should rule the world, when all nations should come and pour their wealth at her feet. But from the ranks of the suffering and oppressed came a different expectation. It is voiced in Isaiah: "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots shall bear fruit .... ; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither decide after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land. .... He shall bring forth justice to the nations. .... He shall bring forth justice in truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set forth justice in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."[2]

So much for the various manifestations of class-consciousness and for the varying degrees of injustice displayed in the different periods of Israel's history. It may now be interesting to turn for a moment to the steps taken in the successive legal codes for the

1.Op. cit., p.217.
2.Is. 11:1-4; 42:1-4.

preservation of the rights of the poor. For the outstanding fact regarding the poor was that they were in position to be run over and set at naught by their more powerful neighbors. In every code provisions were made for the safeguarding of the rights of the poor and for the punishment of those who should do them wrong. It is to be recognized, of course, that even in the most liberal of the legislation only Israelites were concerned. As Dr. Bade has pointed out in his discussion of the social ethics of Deuteronomy, it was particularistic and its provisions did not extend beyond the limits of the nation or the race, except in the case of the client or "stranger within the gates", who was given a degree of recognition. The foreigner was beyond the pale.

In every legal code --- the Book of the Covenant,[1] the Deuteronomic code, the Holiness Law,[2] and the Priests' code --- we find sentiments and enactments in the interest of the poor. Cone quotes passages which reveal the sympathy of the law givers for the oppressed. "Thou shalt not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."[3] "If thou at all take thy neighbor's garment to pledge, thou shalt restore it unto him before the sun goeth down: for that is his only covering, it is his garment for his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am gracious."[4]

1.Exodus 20:22- 23:33. 3.Ibid. 19:18.
2.Lev. 17 - 26. 4.Ex.22:26 f.

There are enactments concerning the treatment and release of slaves, concerning the borrower and the taking of usury, concerning he leaving of a portion of the crop that the poor may glean and so have a living; concerning the Sabbatic year when the whole crop is left for the poor; and concerning the year of Jubilee, each fiftieth year, when the land shall revert to its original holders. All of these laws were violated. In the post-exilic times, even during the days of strict law observance under Ezra, it seems that some of these laws received little attention. And the law concerning the year of Jubilee was apparently never observed, but was the impractical expression of idealism on the part of the law givers.[1] But impractical and ineffective as some of the legislation was, it reveals the sympathies of the best minds in Israel and shows the efforts made toward the doing of justice to the unfortunate. McFadyen points out the increasing humanity of the legislation in the successive codes: "Deuteronomy marks a distinct advance on the book of the Covenant in the laws governing pledges and the release of a slave debtor;[2] even the ritual P, in the laws governing the harvest[3] shows a more deliberately tender interest in the poor than the Humane Deuteronomist.[4]." [5]

As we conclude this brief study of the relation of rich and poor in the Old Testament, we may summarize our results. The outstanding fact is that the sympathy of the

1.Cone, Op.cit., p.42
2.Cf.Ex.22:26f.,Dt.24:6 and Ex.21:4f, Dt.15:12f.
3.Lev. 19:9; 23:22.
4.Dt. 24:19.
5.Exp. Times, Jan.,1926, p.186.

Old Testament writers was always with the poor. And Rauschenbusch suggests that "a man's sympathy is a more decisive fact in his activity than his judgment".[1] In the Old Testament poverty is an evil, an evil that according to the will of God must one day be done away. Job and the Proverbs and the Psalms are full of the story of the misery of the poor. Poverty leads to every sort of social disability and the very name poverty comes to stand for social inferiority and disability. The poor man is a fit subject for exploitation of every sort; he is forced to borrow and exorbitant interest is charged; if he cannot pay he is sold into slavery; his legal rights are sacrificed; he runs the risk of the hatred of his friends;[2] and his wisdom is disregarded.[3] The Old Testament sees in poverty no virtue, not even an ascetic value. Wealth is denounced because of the hardness of heart it engenders, because of the proneness of its possessors to violate the rights of the poor and under-privileged. But prosperity as the gift of God is the ultimate goal of all. Jahveh is everywhere and always the defender of the poor. The oppressed are spoken of as God's poor.[4] Psalmist and prophet and legislator alike are certain that Jahveh is the friend of the needy.

To quote McFadyen again: "The Old Testament does not show, on the economic side, how poverty is to be overcome. The prophets never deal technically with the economic

1. Christianity and the Social Crisis, p.12.
2. Proverbs 14:20; Psalms 19:7.
3. Ecclesiastes 9:15 f.
4. Psalms 72:2.

reconstruction of society, even the legislators have not always a clear glimpse into what is practicable. ... It is their imperishable glory that they laid bare the ethical and religious foundations of human society, without which no merely economic reconstruction can be permanently satisfactory or stable, and that they passionately insisted upon the indefeasible importance of personal worth".[1]

1.Expository Times, Jan.,1926, p.189.

II. THE APPROACH OF MATTHEW, MARK, AND LUKE

No defense is needed for a consideration of the Synoptic Gospels rather than the four Gospels as a basis for our knowledge of Jesus' teaching concerning riches and poverty and his attitude toward rich and poor, because the lateness of the Fourth Gospel and its apparent purpose to interpret the life and ministry of Jesus rather than to set forth with any accuracy his deeds and teachings is now quite generally accepted. And the Fourth Gospel has little to contribute to such a study as we are making. In fact, Mark may for the most part be excluded from our consideration, too; for Mark is almost universally recognized as one of the sources of the other two Synoptics; and the teaching that is of interest to us that is contained in Mark is to be found in Matthew or Luke or both as they have gleaned it from their common source. Mark, too, is a source of narrative materials and incidents, rather than of any great amount of teaching.

But as we place the Gospels side by side and study their likenesses and their differences, we find that Matthew and Luke had other sources besides Mark, that apparently they had a common source from which a considerable portion of their material came,-- material not found in Mark, but upon which Matthew and Luke are agreed. In addition it seems that the author of the first Gospel and the author of the third Gospel each had

access to some source or sources not available to the other, so there is found in each Gospel a certain portion of material peculiar to that Gospel. There are certain characteristic ideas, either to be attributed to the personal bias of the author of the Gospel or to the source from which his information came. The problem, then, in any study of the gospel records is to discover, if we can, how largely personal bias has entered in, how largely preconception and prejudice in the mind of the author has influenced his record and his interpretation of the facts which lie back of it; how authentic the line of tradition is which has come to him, how reliable his sources; which of the gospel records, where there is disagreement among them, seems to be most near to the mind and teaching of Jesus. The study of the Gospels for the mind of Jesus is not, then, the simple and easy matter that at first it seems to be. But it is by no means a hopeless task; we may expect with a reasonable degree of accuracy to discover at least the main points of Jesus' interest and emphasis.

We cannot here present any detailed study of the Synoptic problem, which has been suggested above; nor can we give any careful consideration to the sources of the various Gospels. Many interesting and valuable discussions of these matters will be found; among the briefest and most satisfying is that of Dr. Montefiore in the Introduction to Volume One of his "The Synoptic Gospels". The reader will find it worth while to study the great

Jewish scholar's weighing of the testimony of the different schools and critics. Suffice it for our purpose to set forth some of the conclusions upon which there is a measure of agreement.

The Gospel of Mark is the first of the Synoptics to have assumed its final form, having been completed not later than 70 A.D. The writers of Matthew and Luke, which gospels took form probably between 90 and 100 A.D., made use of the Markan material in some form as a source. Much of their arrangement follows the Markan order, and most of the material of the second Gospel is repeated, in many cases verbatim, in others with certain editorial changes or additions, in the other two.

The first and third gospels have a second common source commonly known as Q (from Quelle, "source") which according to most authorities is as early as the Markan material. Bacon and some others contend that it is earlier and that Mark made some use of it. However that may be, this source, which is largely made up of sayings of Jesus, is fully as early and authentic as the material presented in Mark.

In both Matthew and Luke there is, as suggested above, a considerable element, quite largely parables, which is found only in a single Gospel. Loisy and some others attribute this to Q, but most authorities believe that these teachings and the narratives peculiar to the individual gospels are to be attributed to unknown sources

to which Matthew or Luke had access but which were unknown to other writers. These sources may have been fully as early as either Q or Mark, but this is until now a matter of conjecture.

The personal bias and interest of the writer is a factor, but how large a factor is dependent upon the amount of writing he does himself and the amount he takes over from his sources. There is to be noted in Matthew a Judaic interest (although in this same gospel comes the severest denunciation of the Jews), an emphasis upon the Law and the fulfilment of prophecy, and a certain ecclesiastical interest. The gospel according to Luke, on the other hand, seems to have been written more largely from the Gentile point of view. It is more nearly universal in its outlook, is intensely humanitarian and sympathetic toward the sinner, the outcast, and the poor. The parables peculiar to Luke are full of this sympathy and this interest in the poor. We shall discover that sayings which are treated in the other gospels find in Luke a stressing in behalf of the poor --- as, for example, the Beatitude which in Matthew is recorded "Blessed are the poor in spirit", in Luke is "Blessed are ye poor". Someone has referred to Luke as the "socialist among the evangelists". Along with the sympathy for the poor there is in Luke what Montefiore calls "his somewhat accentuated antagonism to the rich".[1] Now an important question is as to how

1. Synoptic Gospels, Vol.I, p.lxv.

much of it comes from an early and authentic source, and how much of it is the outgrowth of the personal interest and sympathy of Luke. Concerning it Montefiore says: "Naturally a good deal depends upon the question whether the peculiar matter found only in Luke comes from some old and trustworthy source. I am inclined to think that as regards many of the special sayings and parables this is indeed true. Even though these sayings and parables may have been originally said (in a more primitive form) by Jesus, yet, we can imagine a collection of sayings and parables in which one particular aspect of Jesus's teaching was specially emphasized. And this seems to have been the case as regards his teaching about forgiveness and humility, the poor and the rich, and the boundlessness of the divine mercy. Such stories, sayings and parables as those contained in VII:36-50, X:29-37, XV:11-32, XVI:19-31, XII:15-21, XVII:9-14, do seem to have a certain character in common, and may be due to a common source. Nevertheless this source would faithfully reflect -- as it seems to me -- one aspect of the character and teaching of Jesus. That aspect of the Master in which he appears as the friend of taxcollectors and sinners is prominent in Luke, and this prominence may be due to a special source."[1]

But whether we read Mark or Matthew or Luke, we realize that a very significant place is given to teaching concerning poverty and wealth; and that in the mind of each evangelist it had such attention as could only have been

1. Op. cit., Vol.I, pp.lxv, lxvi.

the result of its importance in the mind and teaching of Jesus himself.

A further matter that must be borne in mind as we note the approach of the Synoptists is the apocalyptic ideas and influences that were prevalent at the beginning of the Christian era. As to the influence of apocalypticism upon the thought of Jesus and upon the mind of the authors of the Gospels there seems to be a wide divergence of opinion among those who write upon the gospel conception of the kingdom and its life. Peabody, Rauschenbusch, Kent and Matthews in their studies of the social message of the gospels have little to say about the apocalyptical element and eschatological background, the popular and largely prevailing conception of the immediate cataclysmic coming of the Kingdom with the end of the present age. These writers see in the Gospels the picture of a developing Kingdom. Cone, on the other hand, finds the Gospels dominated by the apocalyptic idea, all the teachings being given in the shadow of an imminent destruction of the present order. According to his conception demands are recorded that would have been impossible had there been present in the mind of the writer the belief in the continuance of the present order of society. Cone's idea is that this point of view is not to be attributed to the Gospel writers alone, as the result of the influence of the thought of the age upon them, but rather that it was the point of view of Jesus, that he too was a child of his age.

His expectation was that of the coming of the Kingdom from God, without the help of men; what was required of men was to be ready for the Kingdom, and poverty was more conducive to readiness than was wealth.[1]

An examination of the Gospels does reveal in large degree this apocalyptic influence. The question arises as to what extent this is the product of the mind of the evangelists and how largely it is a portrayal of the mind of the Master himself. And it is doubtful whether a final and satisfactory answer to this question can be found. It is quite possible that the apocalyptical coloring in the teachings of Jesus has been intensified in passing through the thought of his followers who were steeped in the current apocalypticism; for the fact that the writers looked for a catastrophic coming of the Kingdom is beyond question.

But one valuable contribution that the apocalyptic movement made has often been over looked. Usually it is thought of as having to do only with the future, that it is not concerned with the present order of things. The most significant element in apocalypticism, however, is this: it was social to the core. And in the time of Jesus it was the one movement that was characterized by this note; it was the continuation of the prophetic cry for justice, and anyone who would in that day voice the cause of the downtrodden must use the vocabulary of apocalyptic. Dr. McCown suggests: "It was the sole medium for the

1. Cone, Op.cit.,Ch.III, pp.68-89.

expression of political and industrial discontent and social aspiration. Probably no one could have been found among the whole people holding the ancient prophetic ideals who did not with them combine theapocalyptic- eschatological program."[1] And it is this phase of the apocalyptic thought that most largely entered into the thought of Jesus, its inward and ethical elements rather than its external aspects.

He misreads the Gospels who finds in them the apocalyptic as the major note. We discover in Jesus two not wholly reconciled points of view --- the apocalyptic and the developmental, the Kingdom as a cataclysmic and catastrophic work of God and the Kingdom as the result of the long labors of God and man together.[2] It would seem that those who overlook the apocalyptic element in the Gospels err, as do those who make the Synoptic teaching purely eschatological and the morality of the Gospels a mere "interimsethik". We cannot know how truly those who reported Jesus' teachings understod the real content of his message, but we must with von Dobschutz agree that Jesus' eschatology was a "transmuted eschatology". He says: "I mean eschatology transmuted in the sense that what was spoken of in Jewish eschatology as to come in the last days is taken here as already at hand in the lifetime of Jesus; transmuted at the same time in the other sense that what was expected as an external change is taken inwardly: not all people seeing it, but Jesus' disciples becoming aware of it".[3] Whatever the evangelists may

1.McCown, Promise of His Coming, p.153. 2.Ibid., p.166.

have had in their own minds, the Master's use of apocalyptic language does not imply his acceptance of the meaning of those terms which was current in his day. The profound reflection of apocalypticism in Jesus'message is the social note, the condemnation of the rich, the encouraging of the poor.[1]

It may not be amiss again to call attention here to the probable use of the terms for "poor" among the Jews of Jesus' day, a question dealt with in the writer's Master's thesis. To quote briefly: "The word ani, usually translated 'afflicted' or 'poor' really means 'one humbled or bowed down' by oppression and deprivation of rights and also by misfortune. As those thus oppressed would naturally be in poverty, the word came to have the meaning, 'poor'. But Driver reminds us that ' ani does not really mean poor and that while in the English word poor the prominent idea is the poverty of the person or persons so described, in the Hebrew ani the prominent idea is that of the ill treated, or the miserable; in other words, the ani, while often no doubt, a person in need, was primarily a person suffering some kind of social disability or distress.'[2] The Hebrew word which denotes poverty is rash, a word used very seldom in the Old Testament except in Proverbs. Its antithesis is ashir, rich, which is never used as the opposite of ani, as Rahlfs has pointed out. ...

Driver's conclusion is that the ani and the anaw (humble)

1. See my M.A. thesis, pp. 42-44.
2. HDB, article "Poor", Vol. IV, pp.19f.

constituted a party in ancient Israel, 'which appears to have first begun to form itself during the period of the later pre-exilic prophets, but which, during the exile and subsequently, acquired a more marked and distinctive character -- the party, viz., of the faithful and God-fearing Israelites, who held together and formed an ecclesiola in ecclesia, as opposed to the worldly and indifferent, often also paganizing and persecuting, majority'."[1]

This commonly understood meaning of the term may help us in interpreting the message of the Gospels, particularly as we bear in mind the fact that the interest of Jesus and of the evangelists was not primarily --- nor even consciously --- sociological, but was, as was that of the prophets before them, wholly religious.

We may now proceed to an examination, comparison, and evaluation of the teachings concerning rich and poor as set forth in Matthew and Luke.

1.See my M.A. thesis, pp.4-6.

III. THE TEACHING IN MATTHEW AND LUKE

We have noted the fact that Jesus' interest in the oppressed is not confined to the testimony of one gospel writer, but that the Synoptists are at one in their presentation of the Master as one whose interest was in and whose sympathies were with the oppressed, the unfortunate, the poor. Mark, while having less to say on the subject than either of the others, yet tells the story of the rich young man whom the Master commands, "Go, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven," and concludes with the statement, "It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God".[1] Matthew and Luke tell the same story and bear testimony to many other incidents and teachings in which the poor are favorably contrasted with the rich. It is Matthew that records the invitation, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden,"[2] and Luke carries through his gospel the spirit of the hymn attributed to Mary the expectant mother, a hymn which reflects the apocalyptic spirit of the Psalm of Solomon:

> "He hath put down princes from their thrones,
> "And hath exalted them of low degree.
> "The hungry he hath filled with good things;
> "And the rich he hath sent empty away." [3]

According to Luke, the ministry of Jesus opened

1. Mark 10:17-27; cf. Matt.19:23-30, Luke 18:18-27.
2. Matt.11:28 3.Luke 1:52,53.

with his quotation from the prophet Isaiah, as in the synagogue at Nazareth the Master applied these words to himself and his mission:

> "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
> "Because he annointed me to preach good tidings
> to the poor;
> "He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
> "And recovering of sight to the blind,
> "To set at liberty them that are bruised,
> "And to declare the acceptable year of the Lord."[1]

Both Matthew and Luke record the question that comes from John the Baptist, "Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?"[2] Then there is voiced again as the answer the same sentiment from Isaiah: Tell John what you see and hear --- relief to the suffering, life to the dead, the preaching of the good news to the poor. And the last seems to be regarded as the crowning proof of a God-given ministry.

When we come to the record of the Beatitudes we find a very interesting difference between Matthew and Luke. Matthew records more Beatitudes than does Luke, Luke adds a group of "woes", and the two writers disagree in their wording of the Beatitudes. Matthew says: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, blessed are they that mourn";[3] while Luke says:"Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God; blessed are ye that hunger now, for ye shall be filled; blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh"[4]. And he adds:"But woe unto you that

1.Luke 4:18,19.
2.Luke 7:22, Matt.11:5f.
3.Matt. 5:3,4,6.
4.Luke 6:20,21.

are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto ye that are full now! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you, ye that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep."[1]

Of this passage Dr. Peabody says: "Of the two readings 'Blessed are the poor in spirit' and 'Blessed are ye poor', it is on the face of things not likely that the peculiar depth and beauty of the truth which the first passage expresses should be a gloss upon the superficial, not to say questionable teaching of the second passage."[2] But Dr. Peabody is not the only one who expresses an opinion on the subject, nor do all those who do express opinions think that he is right. It is difficult to discover which evangelist most nearly presents here the thought of Jesus, and it will be of interest to note some opinions on the question.

The tendency of many commentators and writers seems to be similar to that of Peabody, and most of the homiletic presentations of the Beatitudes are based upon the wording of Matthew. Bossuet as quoted by Cone says, "A series of sayings of Jesus in this direction (favoring the poor) have been forged in Luke's Gospel."[3] J. Weiss simply states that the Beatitudes in Luke's Gospel are "certainly not the original form". He seems to assume that both presentations are original with Jesus, saying, "Luke or his source has selected in a rather mechanical manner only those that relate to conditions of external distress."[4] Weizsacker thinks that because Luke contains fewer

1. Luke 6:24& 25.
2. J.C. and Social Question, p.195.
3. Cone, op.cit.,p.120.
4. Ibid., p.120.

Beatitudes it contains a later revision of Matthew.[1]

Dr. Votaw in his article on the Sermon on the Mount in Hastings Dictionary of the Bible[2] quotes numerous conflicting authorities on the first beatitude and, after declaring it likely that Jesus used the term 'poor' in the sense in which Dr. Driver says it was generally used in Jesus' day,[3] presents his own view as follows: "In that case the words 'in spirit' which in Matthew are associated with the phrase, but not in Luke, may be an expansion of the original utterance made in the Greek for the purpose of protecting Jesus' words from a material misrepresentation".

A. B. Bruce in an interesting and scholarly study of the Beatitudes in his "The Galilean Gospel," after pointing to the differences in Matthew and Luke, says: "If the question be asked which of the two forms is the more original, our judgment inclines to that of Luke. Speaking generally, the more pregnant kernel-like form of any saying of Jesus is always the more likely to have been that actually used by Him. The briefer, less-developed form is most in keeping with the striking originality of his teaching. Christ .... loved short, suggestive sentences, revealing much, hiding much, arresting attention, taking hold of the memory, provoking thought, demanding explanation. Then the very breadth of the announcements in Luke is in favor of their

1. Cone, op.cit., pp.120,121.
2. Extra Volume, pp. 14-18.
3. See above, pp.27,28.

being the authentic utterances of Jesus. .... The classes addressed were in his heart, he cared for them, sympathized with them, desired their well-being; in a word, He was the poor man's friend. This at least is implied in the opening sentence of the sermon, 'Blessed are ye poor'. It showed how near the poor lay to the speaker's heart, that at least they had the blessing of his most earnest sympathy."[1]

Gerald Friedlander, speaking of Matthew's version and stressing the apocalyptic element in Jesus' message, says: "This is an expansion of Luke's version, 'Happy are ye poor'. .... Why were the poor told that they were destined to enjoy happiness? It would be idle to believe that Jesus believed that the poor were really happy. The actual experience of life would contradict this. The reason is that the sermon was delivered only to the narrow circle of disciples who were very poor people. The first message is to encourage them. They are promised happiness in the coming Kingdom. Here on earth they are poor --- there, in the new kingdom, they will be rich."[2] Plummer rather weakly expands Luke's statement to mean, "To you, my disciples, poverty is a blessing because it makes you feel your dependence on God."[3] Certain it is,however, that Jesus' chief cause for his bitterness toward riches was the power of wealth to make man trust in possessions rather than in God.

1. Op. cit., pp. 43,45.
2. Jewish Sources of Sermon on Mount, pp.17,18.
3. Luke, Int. Crit. Com., p.180

Says Cone: "The criticism of the text has derived by induction the principle that readings, the tendency of which is to remove difficulties, soften a harsh saying, or 'spiritualize' a passage are to be suspected";[1] and he points to the fact that both Matthew and Luke in Jesus' declaration of his mission, say that his coming was to "preach the gospel to the poor". Quoting B. Weiss, he says, "It was the poor who according to the promise of the Old Testament had to expect the Messianic blessedness, because among the poor and wretched of the people the genuine theocratic piety had been best preserved."[2] So it would seem that there is at least as good ground for accepting the Beatitudes of Luke as those of Matthew. And Holtzmann argues that the artistic construction of Matthew's record as against the various settings presented by Luke is favorable to the originality of the third Gospel.

For the "woes" of Luke it seems that not so good a case can be made. Montefiore says of them, "They sound somewhat mechanical and late. To address the absent rich in the second person seems artificial. The'woes' were easily constructed with the Beatitudes as basis and contrast."[3] It is of this that Cone speaks when he says: "Of all the fragmentary reports of the sayings of Jesus preserved in the Gospels, this fragment is the most unsatisfactory. It appears to have been inserted in a

1. Op. cit., p.100.
2. Ibid., p. 99.
3. Synoptic Gospels, Vol.II, p.887.

quite one-sided interest, the interest that in Luke's source had a predominant importance --- that of showing Jesus attitude to have been friendly to the poor."[1]

The seeking after wealth is time and again condemned in the synoptics. Riches are but vain show. They do not abide. They are filled with danger for the possessor. "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth consume and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where thy treasure is, there will thy heart be also."[2] Luke makes a similar statement: "Make for yourselves purses which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not", and he prefaces it with the command, "Sell that which you have and give alms".[3] Again Matthew says: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."[4] The implication is clear in the question: "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his life?"[5]

Closely akin to the thought in this last passage is the story of the Rich Fool as recorded by Luke. Jesus has been asked to bid one divide an inheritance with his brother, and in refusing he says: "Take heed and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's

1.Cone, op.cit., p.128.
2.Matt. 6:19-21.
3. Luke 12: 33,34.
4. Matt. 6:33.
5. Matt.16:26.

life consisteth not in the abundance of things that he possesseth".[1] Then comes the story of the rich farmer who has too much grain for his barns, who is so opulent that he says: "'Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry'. But God said to him,'Thou foolish one, this night is thy soul required of thee; and the things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?' So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." Jesus aversion to wealth is here seen to rest on two things: the tendency of wealth to become the all-sufficient goal in life and its tendency to make for a life of self-indulgence and ease.

It may be well here to quote Cone's statement concerning Jesus' apparent hostility to riches. He says: "Jesus spoke of wealth as he saw it --- a canker consuming the souls of men, not of wealth as it might become in a different social order from that of his time ---'a means to moral ends, the fondation of an ethical life-work, the instrument of good, wholesome activity in the service of the God of mankind.'"[2] But William Newton Clarke makes this practical and universal application of the story: "The selfish, thoughtless rich of all ages, who know no use for their wealth beyond their own enjoyment, and fancy that this is enough, here have the withering light of Jesus' ideal turned upon them. Their

1. Luke 12: 13-21.
2. Cone, op. cit., p.103.

alienation from that ideal is complete, and their failure is as sure as death."[1] Montefiore indicates that in the parable Jesus does not go beyond the teaching of the Forty-ninth Psalm.[2]

There is an implication here as to the use to be made of possessions. In other passages we find this more fully developed: for example, in the parable of the Talents[3] or its parallel in Luke, the parable of the Pounds.[4] Very clearly there is here set forth the responsibility of the individual for what has been committed to his keeping; each individual is a steward. Cone finds here no teaching concerning wealth. He finds with Julicher, only a commendation of fidelity in view of the coming of the end of the age.[5] The reference to wealth is according to this view wholly incidental. B. Weiss, on the other hand, as quoted by Cone says in this connection: "Thus worldly goods serve the purposes of the kingdom of God, and only he who makes them fruitful to this end can in truth increase them." Clarke says: "He has not said in so many words that wealth is a trust from God, but his manner of using the financial illustration implies this lesson."[6] The position of Clarke seems a reasonable one. Certainly the purpose of the parable is not to teach anything concerning riches, but the implication, the assumption of an attitude toward wealth, is too clear to be mistaken.

1.Ideal of Jesus,p.241. 4.Luke 19:12-26.
2.Synoptic Gospel,II,p.955. 5.Cone,op.cit.,p.110.
3.Matt. 25:14-30. 6.Clarke, op.cit.p.239.

This brings us to one of the very interesting problems in connection with the Synoptic teaching regarding rich and poor --- the attitude toward almsgiving. We have already quoted the injunction, "Sell what thou hast and give alms". We have noted in the incident of the Rich Young Man, which finds a place in all three of the Gospels, the command of Jesus that the young man "sell all" and give the proceeds to the poor. We may recall the story of Zaccheus the Publican who after his conversation with Jesus agrees to restore four-fold to those from whom he has taken unlawful exactions and declares it is his intention to give half his goods to feed the poor.[1] Matthew in the Sermon on the Mount says, "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away",[2] and Luke in a parallel passage says, "Give to everyone that asketh thee, and of him that taketh away thy goods, ask them not again."[3] Ostentation in almsgiving is condemned: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."[4]

On the basis of these references to almsgiving and the apparent approval and commands of Jesus, Cone speaks: "We find no other use of riches recommended by Jesus than just this of almsgiving;"[5] and again: "Whatever may now be thought of almsgiving by those who have thoroughly studied the social question, Jesus evidently regarded it as meritorious. .... Nothing is said of the

1.Luke 19:1-10. 3.Luke 6:30
2.Matt. 5:42. 4.Matt.6:3.
5. Op. cit., p.114.

effect of such a disposal of riches upon the poor or upon society at large. No account seems to have been taken of this matter. Rather the indications are that the directions sprang out of a spontaneous sympathy for the poor, so far as the destination of the hindrance to be got rid of (wealth) was concerned, and was not based upon any well-considered method of beneficence."[1] Dr. Kent, however, having in mind the very prominent place of almsgiving in the thought and life of the times, says: "It is significant how small a place Jesus gave in his teachings to the subject of almsgiving. ..... Jesus is simply interested in its effect upon the giver."[2] Says Dr. Peabody: "It is important to note that almsgiving, though assumed by Jesus to be a habit of his followers, does not receive from him a high place among Christian virtues..... Acceptable almsgiving must be measured not by the amount of the gift, but by the cost of the gift to the giver."[3] And the incident of the widow's mite is cited as a case in point. In Mark 14:7 Jesus is quoted, "Ye have the poor with you always; and whensoever ye will, ye may do them good." His emphasis is upon the rights of the poor, but more upon the duties of the rich. "When thou makest a dinner or a supper call not thy friends (Plummer weakly says, '<u>Habitually</u> call not, etc.')[4], nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen, nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also bid thee again, and a

1.Cone,op.cit.,112.
2.Soc.Teach.Prophets and Jesus, p.238.
3.Op.cit., p.217.
4.Plummer, Luke, I.C.C., p.358.

recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, bid the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; because they have not wherewith to recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just."[1]

A fair statement of Jesus' attitude toward almsgiving as set forth in the Synoptics is perhaps that of Swete in commenting on the incident of the Rich Young Man, "The self-sacrifice which the Lord imposed on this wealthy enquirer asserts in principle the duty of the rich to minister to the poor; the particular form which this ministry must take varies with the social conditions of the age."[2]

The ministry of those that have to those that have not is basic in the thought of the Evangelists. "And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."[3] In the Matthean picture of the great judgment[4] this ministry is the determining factor in the judgment that is passed. On one side are the blessed; on the other are those who are sent away into punishment. "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink;

1.Luke 14:12-14.
2.Quoted by Plummer, Com.on Matt.,p.268.
3.Matt.10:42.
4.Ibid.,25:31-46.

I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison and ye came unto me. ..... Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me. .... Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me."

Cone thinks of the instance of the Rich Young Man not as the case of one seeking to become a follower of Jesus, but rather of one trying to know the blessedness of the coming Kingdom. And he makes Jesus' answer one which came out of his expectation of the immediacy of that Kingdom's coming. He makes the renunciation of wealth essential not to becoming a follower of the Master but the prerequisite of entrance into the coming Kingdom. Cone quotes with disapproval the words of Wendt which seem a reasonable statement: "If we take into account Jesus' general religious view and his pregnant manner of expressing himself, we must judge that in these rough requirements of renunciation he only wished to give the sharpest possible expression to the principle that his disciples must rank heavenly goods above those of earth, and in a conflict of their tasks in the Kingdom of God with earthly goods they mus unconditionally give up the latter in order not to lose the heavenly."[1]

Perhaps no parable of Jesus has caused more

1.Cone, op.cit., p.108,footnote.

difficulty in interpretation than that which Luke gives us concerning the Unjust Steward.[1] Various allegorical interpretations have been set forth. Others draw some such conclusion as that of Shailer Mathews:" Wealth should be so used as to insure the maintenance of friendship".[2] Or, "As he by trickiness, not to say dishonesty, had won for himself friends, so it is possible in a nobler way for men so to use wealth as to bind others closer to themselves. This is one of the tests of character, this making of friends by money."[3] Cone says, on the other hand, that the passage can be understood only in the light of Jesus' apocalyptic expectations. Dr. Clarke says of Jesus' statement, "And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness: that when it shall fail, they may receive you into the eternal tabernacles": "Of course this is ironical. When Jesus tells the holders of dishonest money to do what the villain in the story did, in hope of gaining what he had sought, there is no other way to understand him; he must be ironical. ... The plan does not succeed, even in the story; how much less, then, with God."[4] Thus the parable becomes a denunciation of false dealing. Montefiore points out that some commentators find the meaning of the parable in the fact that Jesus wanted his follow-

1.Luke 16:1-12. 3. Qtd.by Cone, op.cit.p.134.
2.Soc.Gospel, p.101. 4.Clarke,op.cit.,pp.246-47.

ers to be clever and alert. He quotes J.Estlin Carpenter with a different view: "Worldly wealth must be employed in alms, so as to secure entry into the dwelling places of the coming age. The moral quality of the steward's proceedings does not come into view: he simply serves as an illustration of worldly wisdom. In its present form the story seems plainly to belong to that section of the church which viewed wealth as unrighteous and found merit in poverty."[1] Others, however, find the "mammon of unrighteousness" not to mean all wealth, but only that dishonestly acquired. Clarke's interpretation would seem to be the most acceptable; for irony had its place in Jesus' speech, and taking this injunction as ironical leads naturally to the conclusion of the parable, a conclusion which parallels the message of the parable of the Talents ---"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much." Then the difficulty of the rich is again brought out: No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will cleave to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

There remains to be considered the Lukan parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus.[2] This parable on the face of it seems to bear out the attitude voiced in the Beatitudes and "woes" ---"Blessed are

1.Montefiore, Op.cit.,Vol.II, p.995.
2. Luke 16:19-26.

ye poor; woe unto you that are rich." It is quite in keeping with the apocalyptic picture of the end, when the "kings and the mighty shall be brought low" and when the poor shall reign in glory. As we have noted, there were in the Old Testament two points of view on wealth --- that of the comfortable who felt that the blessing of God was upon them, that their wealth was evidence of the fact, and that poverty was God's punishment for sin; and that of the poor, who looked for the reversal of the present order, and for the day when the suffering righteous should enjoy bounty. This parable expresses the point of view of the latter group. It is a warning to the rich, a comfort to the poor. Says Montefiore in commenting on verse 25: "Abraham's argument is simple. He who fares well in this world must fare ill in the next and vice versa. You cannot have a good time in both worlds, so you have nothing to complain of. It is not said, though it is implied, that the rich man was bad, or that Lazarus was good; the question, what should happen to a good rich man or a bad poor one is ignored; nor is the inequality of temporal happiness being balanced by eternal misery thought of."[1] It is in harmony with the rabbinical principle that "earthly good fortune is misfortune, since it may serve as a reward for our merits, and rob us of heavenly bleseedness."[2]

1. Op.cit., Vol.II, p.1004.
2. Cone, op.cit., p.139.

Montefiore doubts if this parable came from Jesus. Others share his doubt, some on the basis of the teaching set forth above which seems out of harmony with Jesus' message, others on the ground that it differs in form from the other parables, having one of its characters named. But there seems to be no real reason why this parable should not have been spoken by Jesus. And surely the implication as to the righteousness of Lazarus is to be seen, and the sin of the rich man is clearly evident in his heartless self-satisfaction which blinds him to the need of his unfortunate fellow. Says Cone: "According to the doctrine of the Pharisees as to rewards and punishments for the righteous and wicked in the underworld, the hearers of Jesus must have regarded the fate of the men as determined by their lives, and not merely by the fact that one was rich and the other poor. Although this fact cannot be taken into account in the exegesis of the parable, it is admissible in its historical interpretation. We have already mentioned some of the reasons for Jesus' beatitude upon the poor and his sympathy for the unfortunate. The rich man, living in pomp and luxury every day, must have seemed to him to be averse to the kingdom of God as the poor were in general predisposed to it."[1] To quote Clarke: "The lesson that the parable does drive home with power is that wealth brings to its possessor a terrible opportunity and temptation to be separate in interest from his kind. If it absorbs him in

1. Op. cit., pp. 138-39.

luxury and enjoyment, it isolates him. At his princely table a man is apt to forget that there are beggars, even though one is lying at his door. If he knows that the beggars exist, still his luxury may easily blind him to their necessities."[1]

This brief study has, I think, sufficed to show the significant place that the relations of rich and poor take in the thinking of the Evangelists and in their presentation of the message of Jesus. Not alone in Luke, with his special interest in the poor and the unfortunate, but in all the Synoptics the attitude is one of sympathy for the oppressed, and while we nowhere find mention of the temptations that come with poverty, there is everywhere the warning against the "deceitfulness of riches". It remains for us to briefly summarize the teachings here set forth, and to arrive if we can at some ordered view of Jesus' own thought concerning rich and poor.

1. Clarke, op.cit., p.244.

IV. CONCLUSION: THE NATURE AND VALUE OF JESUS' TEACHINGS ON RICH AND POOR

With the facts and teachings of the Synoptics before us, different men with these same facts and teachings, place such different interpretations and evaluations upon them that they arrive at different conclusions concerning the permanent validity of Jesus' teachings.

Dr. Cone, overemphasizing the influence of the external elements of apocalyptic thinking upon Jesus and attributing to him a "thorough-going eschatology", in spite of the great contributions he has made to our study, goes wide of the mark and fails to give sufficient value to the teachings of Jesus as a constructive force in the social and economic order. He makes the Master's teachings too largely transient in their significance --- unnecessarily so --- too intimately associated with the coming of a new world order. With a wave of the hand he dismisses injunctions concerning non-resistance, renunciation, and the like,[1] as wholly impracticable except in the light of the immediate coming of the kingdom, --- a position that is quite open to question in the light of the successful

1. Cone, op.cit. pp.83,84.

application of those principles to life.

He says: "It is especially noteworthy that while the message is distinctively declared to be 'good tidings' to the poor and unfortunate, it does not very clearly appear how these classes of people are to be relieved. The lame and the deaf and the blind are, indeed, immediately healed, that is, the small number of them within the Healer's reach. As to the poor they have had the good news 'preached' to them. But no direct and permanent measures for the 'cure of poverty' are indicated. ..... Interest in the needy is a prominent feature of the 'program' of the Gospel as it appears in the records; but one searches these records in vain for definite directions as to the construction of a social order that should have no social problem. .... He did not contemplate the slow development of society and the improvement of the conditions of the poor by means of a long and painful wrestling with social problems. To him the Kingdom of God was at hand, and when it should come there would be no social problem."[1]

Contrast with this the declaration of Dr.Kent: "Like the earlier social teachers of his race, he sought to relieve and ultimately to eliminate poverty by removing the underlying causes. In the first place, he endeavored to develop industry and fidelity to one's

1.Op.cit., pp. 71,73.

task, and thus to remove one of the chief causes of pauperism. More fundamental still, he sought by putting men into right relations with their heavenly Father and to their fellow men and by giving them a right estimate of the value of wealth, to free them from worry, and discontent and jealousy and all the evils that destroy physical and mental efficiency. He also aimed to chech at their fountain-source all forms of exaction and exploitation and other unsocial economic evils, which are among the chief causes of poverty. Furthermore he sought to inspire in all men that spirit of fraternity and helpfulness which makes poverty impossible and which insures to each an opportunity to do his part in the world's work. He strove to lead every man to regard the possession of wealth as a divine stewardship to be administered impartially and wisely for the common good. ..... In any society where these principles are accepted, poverty and its twin brother, crime, must in time inevitably disappear. In such a society personality instead of being dwarfed and crushed will attain its noblest and divinest development. Humanity through costly experiments and failures, is just beginning to learn that Jesus was not a vague theorist, but the most practical economic teacher that has ever dealt with these fundamental problems of society, for he looked beyond mere wealth

to abiding personal values."[1]

This last clause of Kent's gives the significant element in Jesus' teaching and attitude. He had the religious point of view, personal values were supreme. In spite of the frequent denunciations of the rich and the commendations of the poor we are convinced that the character of the inner life was the important thing with Jesus and that poverty and riches interested him only as they tended to affect the hearts of men. "No single social type --- the rich or the poor --- monopolized the sympathy or acceptance of Jesus, and he never intended to array one class against another. ..... He was interested only in the extension of the kingdom of God."[2] Clarke puts it thus: "Taking his conduct as a whole, we can not see that Jesus either commended or condemned riches or poverty as necessarily involving a moral quality. Neither class did he either court or shun. He spoke severely and warningly to one class and comfortably to another, but he did not avoid the class that he warned, or praise the class that he comforted. Both were deemed worthy of his company and of his faithful counsels."[3]

From the teachings as set forth in the Synoptics we may draw certain general conclusions as to Jesus point of view.

1.Kent, op.cit.,pp.238,239.
2.Graves,What Did Jesus Teach? p.171.
3.Clarke, op.cit., p.232.

1. As with prophet, psalmist,and apocalyptist before him, his sympathy went out to the poor, the disadvantaged, and he sought to bring them comfort. He discovered in them a receptiveness that was not so evident in the possessors of riches.
2. Jesus assumed the lawfulness of the possession of property. This is evidenced in the parables of the Talents and the Pounds, and in his relationship with Zaccheus.
3. He went so far as to adopt the old Jewish idea that wealth is a gift of God.
4. But possessions do not constitute the highest good in life. A man's life consists not in the abundance of his possessions.
5. Wealth is not an end in itself but a means. It is to be used in the relief of suffering and in the help of the poor.
6. Wealth is transitory and he who bases his hope upon it is doomed to disappointment.
7. Wealth carries with it many perils. It tends to dull the sympathies, to blind its possessor to the sufferings and needs of others. It makes for self-sufficiency, and the pampering of self. It affords opportunity for the oppression of the less fortunate. It divides the loyalty of the one whose it is and drives out the idea of dependence upon God. It shrivels the

soul and dwarfs the personality. "It is harder for a rich man to enter the Kingdom than for a camel to go through the needle's eye."

8. Renunciation of wealth, then, is often necessary for the salvation of life. As Scott points out,[1] Jesus teaching on renunciation grows out of the fact that spiritual interests must be paramount, that wealth deceives one as to his own condition, and that self-denial is an expression of loving and complete obedience to the Father.

9. Always wealth is to be held as a stewardship, subject to the sight draft of the needs of others.

10. Superior to any external condition is character.

11. Covetousness, in rich and poor alike, is con demned.

We must agree with Dr. Cone that if we seek in Jesus' teaching for tangible contributions to the relief of poverty and the launching of a new social program we look in vain. But we must see that Jesus was looking to the future and laying down principles and creating attitudes that will accomplish more than any "social program". His message was one that cut across class distinctions and pierced the walls of external conditions, carrying its message of life to rich and poor alike. With Cone we can say: "Christianity was originally, and is essentially, 'good news

1. Ethical Teachings of Jesus,

for the poor'. It introduced into the world an interest in and a solicitude for the unfortunate that was before unknown, and so far as its primal spirit and purpose have been realized --- too incompletely, alas! there has been a marked improvement of their condition. This Gospel for the poor proves itself good tidings also for the rich, so far as under its influence the hearts of the latter are softened toward their less fortunate brethren, and vast material resources are made to promote the welfare of all. The great New Testament doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, which has as a corollary the dignity of man as man, will accomplish its mission as the gospel of Jesus, the gospel of humanity and love, goes on its conquering course, by turning the hearts of men more and more toward one another and making universal the fellowship of Jesus, in which, according to the primitive-Christian ideal, there shall practically disappear the distinctions of high and low, rich and poor."[1]

1. Op.cit., pp.207-8.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bible, American Revised Version, Nelson.

Allen, W.C. - A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St.Matthew, Scribners, (N.Y.) 1907.

Bade, W.F. - The Old Testament in the Light of Today, Houghton,Mifflin (N.Y. and Boston) 1915.

Bruce, A.B. - The Galilean Gospel, Doran (N.Y.).

_____, - With Open Face, Scribners (N.Y.) 1915.

Budde, K. - Religion of Israel to the Exile, Putnam's, (N.Y. and London) 1899.

Burkitt, F.C. - The Gospel History and Its Transmission, (2nd ed.) T.& T.Clark,(Edinburgh) 1902.

Burton and Goodspeed - Harmony of the Synoptic Gospels, Scribners (N.Y.) 1917.

Cheyney, T.K. - Jewish Religious Life after the Exile, Putnam's (N.Y. and London) 1908.

Clarke, W.N. - The Ideal of Jesus, Scribners (N.Y.) 1911.

Cone, Orello - Rich and Poor in the New Testament, Macmillan (N.Y.) 1902.

Cornill, C.H. - The Prophets of Israel, Open Court Pub.Co. (Chicago) 1895.

Driver, S.R. - Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament (Rev.ed.)Scribners (N.Y.)1922.

Friedlander, G.- Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount, Routledge (London) 1911.

Graves, F.P. - What Did Jesus Teach? Macmillan (N.Y.) 1919.

Harnack, A. - Luke the Physician, Putnam's, (N.Y.) 1907.

Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, Scribners (N.Y.) 1911.
Bebb, Ll.J.M. - Gospel of Luke.
Driver, S.R. - Poor.
Votaw, C.W. - Sermon on the Mount.

Hastings' Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels, Scribners, (N.Y.) 1909.

Slater, J.W. - Wealth.

Keeble, S.E.(Ed.) - Social Teachings of the Bible, Kelly (London) 1910.

Kent, C.F. - Social Teachings of the Prophets and Jesus, Scribners (N.Y.) 1920.

King, H.C. - The Ethics of Jesus, Macmillan (N.Y.) 1912.

McCown, C.C.- The Promise of His Coming, Macmillan, (N.Y.) 1921.

McFadyen, J.E. - Article, Poverty in the Old Testament, Expository Times, January, 1926.

Mathews, S. - The Social Gospel, Griffith and Rowland, (Philadelphia) 1910.

Moffatt, J. - Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament,(3d ed.) Scribners (N.Y.) 1922.

_____, - The Approach to the New Testament, Hodder and Stoughton (London) 1921.

Montefiore, C. - The Old Testament and After, Macmillan (N.Y. and London) 1923.

_____, - The Synoptic Gospels, Macmillan (London)1909.

Patton, C.S. - Sources of the Synoptic Gospels,Macmillan , (N.Y.) 1915.

Peabody, F.G. - Jesus Christ and the Social Question, Macmillan (N.Y.) 1900.

Plummer, A. - An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew, Scribners (N.Y.)1909.

_____, - A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Luke,(I.C.C.) Scribners (N.Y.)

Rauschenbusch, W. - Christianity and the Social Crisis, Macmillan (N.Y.) 1916.

Salmon, G. - The Human Element in the Gospels, John Murray (London) 1908.

Scott, E.F. - The Ethical Teachings of Jesus, Macmillan, (N.Y.) 1924.

Smith, J.M.P. - The Prophet and His Problems, Scribners, (N.Y.) 1916.

Swete, H.B. - Commentary on St. Mark, Macmillan, (London and N.Y.) 1898.

Wallis, L. - Sociological Study of the Bible, U. of Chicago Press (Chicago) 1912.

End of

Rich and poor in the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels

This title is preceded by

The experience of the cross in the New Testament and in the life of to-day

What is religion? : chapters in a guide for college discussion groups

And is continued by

Jesus Christ in the mind of today

The Bible self-revising as shown in the conception of God

Search by above titles on archive.org to continue reading this collection of Pacific School of Religion Theses from 1926 call number Thesis Cage 1926 v.2